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ABSTRACT

A major redirection of federal educational policy has occurred in the past 5 years. The criteria presented in support of this argument encompass both substantive and procedural issues: the substantive content of the policy preferences in education being discussed and acted upon at federal, state, and local levels; and the procedural issues that deal with the role of governmental levels in policy development and administration. The following nine policy preferences are cited with specific supportive actions and emphases: (1) disestablishment of the Department of Education (a reduced federal role in education); (2) institutional competition (breaking the monopoly of the public school to stimulate excellent performance); (3) individual competition (recognizing excellence to stimulate excellence); (4) performance standards (increasing minimum standards for teachers and students); (5) focus on content (emphasis on basics to ensure performance in critical instructional areas); (6) parental choice (parental control over what, where, and how their children will learn); (7) character (strengthening traditional values in schools); (8) devolution (continued transfer of educational authority to state and local levels); and (9) redirection (replacement of policy emphases in the federal role prominent in prior administrations). (MLF)

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# The Significance and Permanence

# of

# Changes in Federal Educational Policy

# 1980-1988

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*A publication of the Policy Studies Center of the University Council for Educational Administration*



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Occasional Paper

January 1986

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## PREFATORY NOTE

The authors have been documenting accurately and predicting (with mixed success) the changes in federal educational policy that have occurred since President Reagan assumed office in January 1981. Sources for the documentation and prediction have been (a) official government publications, (b) periodical coverage of federal educational policy by the general and educational press, (c) publications of policy analysts and agencies, and (d) yearly structured interviews with Washington-based informants in the executive and legislative branches of the federal government and in the professional associations. As the level of activity in educational policy has switched from Washington to the states, the authors have extended their net of publications and informants to include agencies concerned primarily with state activities.

During the 1985-86 academic year, we will be issuing several other occasional papers that will examine:

- Public support levels for the educational policy preferences of the Reagan administration.
- Effects of federal policy shifts in education on state-level educational policy activity.
- Comparative educational policy options under consideration prior to and after 1980.

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## Introduction

Have the past five years produced a significant, enduring change in federal education policy? Is there more to come? The answer to these questions depends upon the individual or group framing the criteria on the basis of which the questions are answered. Jack Jennings (1985), long time counsel for education for the Committee on Education and Labor, House of Representatives, sees little change:

> The smoke of debate [over the federal role in education] should not obscure the reality that the prospects for the survival of federally funded education programs are greater today than at any time since Reagan took office. The President forcefully challenged the very existence of these programs during his first term. But he failed to achieve his goal. In the process of opposing the President's onslaught, Carl Perkins was able to forge a new bipartisan consensus in Congress on the importance of these programs in the total effort to improve U.S. education. (p. 567)

Denis Doyle and Terry Hartle (1985) maintained a view similar to Jennings arguing that:

> What the administration achieved was accomplished in the first six months of the term . . . . Many of its most important goals - tax credits, school prayer, regulatory reform, abolishing the department - are increasingly unlikely. By any score card it has lost more battles than it has won . . . . In basic outline the

federal role in education looks very much as it did under Presidents Nixon, Ford, and Carter. (pp. 148-149)

Eileen Gardner (1984) in Mandate for Leadership II: Continuing the Conservative Revolution assigned mixed grades to the administration's first term performance. While lamenting losses in Congress over tuition tax credits, vouchers, school prayer and the reform of student financial aid, Gardner cited the beginning of a successful revolution, i.e.:

> The Commission on Excellence in Education rallied the nation which had begun the long, arduous journey back to world preeminence in education. Thanks to the Commission, far reaching reform has been generated without additional federal money or mandates. The response to the report on Excellence and the Chapter 2 Block Grant is prophetic: Americans are proving themselves capable and willing to take on the responsibility for educating their children through state and local initiatives - initiatives that were stymied by the growing federal control. (p. 54)

Laurence Iannaccone (1985) viewed the changes as both of significance and duration:

> Whatever the political outcome of the 1986 midterm and 1988 national elections may be, President Reagan and Secretary Bell have accomplished their goals for changing the locus of educational policy making process, its value-driven policy premises and redefining the mission of the schools. These were 1) to return educational policy making to the states and local

districts ("where it belongs" in the words of Secretary Bell, April, 1981); 2) to establish this philosophy of government for a generation and 3) to emphasize basic skills and academic achievement as the central mission of the public schools. (p. 5)

However accurate or valid these assessments may be judged to be, they employed different criteria for change. Jennings used the continued existence of federal programs in education as the criterion. Doyle and Hartle addressed the question at a more global level; the basic outline of the federal educational role was the criterion. Gardner used a set of specific policy preferences in education espoused, in general, by political conservatives, e.g. school prayer, tuition tax credits, increased standards. Iannaccone judged success against what he argued were the most important tools of President Reagan rooted in one overarching goal of domestic policy, i.e., "to transfer many domestic programs to the states" (p.4).

The thesis we will argue in this paper differs markedly from the interpretation of Jennings and Doyle and Hartle; extends beyond the concerns covered by Gardner; is generally consistent with the interpretation of Iannaccone. The thesis is twofold:

1. A major redirection of federal educational policy has occurred in the past five years. The essence of that policy has been altered in basic ways. The bipartisan consensus noted by Jennings is a new consensus in support of a different federal role rather than a new consensus in favor of existing programs.
2. The scope of the redirection will be broadened over the next five

to fifteen years and many of the changes will become institutionalized for a new era of federal educational policy. The change that has occurred had its roots in years preceding the Reagan administration, although its lifeblood was furnished by that administration, and will continue to dominate educational policy development for decades, not for Reagan's second term.

So that you can fairly assess our thesis and the evidence we present in support of its validity, we should make our criteria clear. Firstly, the criteria should encompass the substantive content of the policy preferences in education being discussed and acted upon at federal, state, and local levels. These substantive criteria include both what education should be about, e.g., concentration on basics and character education, and how education should be conducted, e.g., parental control and choice, and individual and institutional competition. Secondly, the criteria should include procedural issues that deal with the role of governmental levels in policy development and administration, e.g., disestablishment of the department of education, devolution, and deregulation.

## Accomplishments of the Reagan Administration in Federal Educational Policy 1981-1984

Before turning to the changes in direction in educational policy over the past five years, we will offer a cursory retrospective (circa 1980-1981) of where the change began. Our argument is that some of the changes have been profound and dramatic. Since it is often easy to adjust over time to even dramatic changes, our cause is served by reminding you of

the starting point.

Retrospective: 1980-1981

Exactly five years ago under the heading, "The Teachers' Coup," the New Republic commented:

> Veteran power brokers have been pushed aside by a relative newcomer to the hurly-burly of capital politics - the National Education Association. In the last four years the NEA has helped elect a President, single-handedly forced a Department of Education down Congress' throat, and lobbied successfully for dramatic increases in federal spending on education. (October 11, 1980, p. 9)

Teacher training institutions were afraid that the new teacher centers (referred to routinely as NEA's proprietary legislation) would usurp the teacher education function of the university.

The new Department of Education (ED) under the leadership of Shirley Hufstedler (how many of you would have missed that trivia question?) was administering 150+ categorical programs with a staff of over 6000 employees and growing. Almost every one of those programs had:

- its own staff
- its own legislative authority
- its own budget
- its own advisory committee and consultants
- and regulations
- and system of evaluation

- and special constituencies of parents, businesses, and educators
- and protective legislative authors and sponsors in Congress.

ED was big business before the Department ever hit the ground and there was no reason to suspect that it would not become bigger.

If you were involved with ED at all, you remember the Teacher Corps, the State Capacity Building Program, the National Diffusion Network, the Joint Dissemination Review Panel. ED was out where the teachers were, involved vigorously in the dissemination and diffusion of new ideas.

The Department focused on equity for the handicapped, for ethnic minority groups, for women. If you submitted a proposal to ED for research, training, or technical assistance, equity concerns had to be reflected in both the content and staffing of the project. Perhaps that is an appropriate way to conclude the retrospective, i.e., by identifying the dominant lexicon of terms that controlled the discussion and emphases of the era:

1. Equity
2. Needs and access
3. Social and welfare concerns
4. The common school
5. Regulations, enforcement, and monitoring
6. Federal initiatives and interventions
7. Diffusion of innovations.

These are foreign terms in Washington today and the new lexicon is especially interesting because an essentially conflictual set of terms has emerged that fits the new educational policy discussions in Washington,

i.e.:

1a. Excellence; standards of performance; individual competition

2a. Ability; selectivity; minimum entrance standards

3a. Economic and productivity concerns

4a. Parental choice; institutional competition

5a. Local initiative; deregulation, limited enforcement

6a. State and local interests and initiatives

7a. Exhortation; information-sharing

Finally, to place the change in contemporary perspective, imagine substituting President Reagan's comments on education in his 1984 State of the Union Address in President Carter's address in 1980. The educational community would have imagined it had been struck by a thunderbolt. In fact, President Reagan's comments were barely newsworthy when he said:

> But we must do more to restore discipline to the schools; and we must encourage the teaching of new basics, reward teachers of merit, enforce standards, and put our parents back in charge. I will continue to press for tuition-tax credits to expand opportunities for families, and to soften the double payment for those paying public school taxes and private school tuition. Our proposal would target assistance to low and middle income families. Just as more incentives are needed within our schools, greater competition is needed among our schools. Without standards and competition there can be no champions, no records broken, no excellence - in education or any other walk of life. And while I'm on the subject - each day your members observe a

> 200 year old tradition meant to signify America is one nation under God. I must ask: If you can begin your day with a member of the clergy standing right here to lead you in prayer, then why can't freedom to acknowledge God be enjoyed again by children in every schoolroom across this land. (p. 91)

Contrast this statement with the lexicon of federal education policy terms numbered 1-7 above. Something big has happened. A major change has taken place. The significance of the change remains to be debated in later sections of this paper.

1981 - Budgetary Reductions

In 1981, the educational policy of the Reagan administration was dominated by procedural considerations. Washington insiders referred to the five Ds, i.e., disestablishment (elimination of the Department of Education), deregulation, decentralization, deemphasis (reduction of the position of education as a priority on the federal agenda), and, most importantly, diminution (reduction of the Federal budget in education). Although the administration's education agenda was precise it lacked a substantive dimension. The components were (1) derivative from broader social policy preferences, e.g., reduce the social program budget, eliminate regulations, foster the new federalism, and (2) reflective of procedural concerns about the federal role in education, e.g., stop throwing money at the problems of education, get the feds off the backs of state and local policy makers who are better able to deal with educational problems.

Unsurprisingly, then, as is obvious in Table 1, the early achievements of the administration reflected these procedural emphases. Educationists were jolted by the first significant reductions in the federal education budget in a quarter century. There was, in fact, not even an interesting debate about the cuts. The administration insisted that reductions in the overall federal budget were imperative, the cuts had to come from the social programs portion of the budget, and education was required to take its share. That meant cutting whenever and wherever it was possible. Before the dust settled the cumulative reductions in the FY '81 and '82 budgets had amounted to roughly twenty percent.

The federal education budget turned out to be a more vulnerable target than its defenders had anticipated. Educationists discovered anew that the budget issue facing them was not simply the size of next year's increase. The 1981 budgetary losses created a mindset that has persisted, i.e., the expectation for less. In the intervening years, educationists have accepted the notion that a program that does not lose money from year-to-year has been successful in defending its position. If diminution is a policy preference, that lesson is a necessary first step.

The big news in 1981 seemed to be only the budget. As it turned out that was not quite the case. Secretary Bell also established the National Commission on Excellence in Education and its chairperson, David P. Gardner, signaled a central theme that would persist and reappear two years later when he commented, "the absence of [such] a standard [of achievement] tends to translate into a situation where there's less pressure [to achieve] and lowered expectations on the part of students to take more

TABLE 1

CHANGES IN FEDERAL EDUCATIONAL POLICY (1981-1984)

| YEAR | HALLMARK | ACTIONS | EFFECTS |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1981 | • Rescissions<br>• Reductions | • Cumulative education budget cuts of over twenty percent | • Establishing the expectations for less (diminution) |
| 1982 | • Block grant | • Implementation of E.C.I.A. | • Dismantling the categorical programs (disestablishment, decentralization) |
| | • Deregulation | • Revocation of regulations | • Constraining ED from the design of educational interventions (disestablishment, decentralization) |
| | | • Constraint on enforcement of regulations | • Moving accountability to the state level (deregulation, decentralization) |
| 1983 | • Report of the National Commission on Excellence | • Publication of A Nation at Risk | • Moving from a focus on equity to excellence |
| | | • Support for the design of career ladders for teachers and other forms of merit pay | • Focusing improvement strategies on adjusting standards (decentralization) |
| | | • Encouragement of upward adjustment of standards | • Reducing the role of the educationist in school improvement |
| | | • National Forum on Education | • Increasing educational policy activity at the state level (decentralization) |
| 1984 | • Awards and Recognition | • Secondary School Recognition Program | • Developing consensus on direction of reform |
| | | • Academic Fitness Awards | • Highlighting reform already underway (disestablishment, decentralization) |
| | | • Excellent Private Schools Program | • Recognizing established performance |
| | | • National Distinguished Principals Program | |

difficult courses or a wider range of them" (Ingalls, 1981, p. 11). The administration asserted less specific substantive goals in 1981 than its policy preferences reflect in 1985, but the affect of the interviewees representing the administration in 1981 was clear - and it sets the stage for many of the more specific policy preferences of later years, to wit:

- o Public education is failing; mediocre at best, wholly ineffective at worst.
- o The federal presence in education has made a bad situation worse. Federal intervention has removed the action from the state and local levels where the problems must be solved.
- o Federal regulations are an unnecessary burden on state and local educational officials. They are contributing to the mediocrity of the field.
- o Federal involvement in education has been misdirected, i.e., emphasizing social and welfare concerns rather than educational performance.

1982 - The Block Grant

If a successful thrust toward diminution was the achievement in 1981, the key event of 1982 was implementation of the Education Consolidation and Improvement Act (E.C.I.A.) - a thrust toward decentralization. The education block grant delivered on the statement in the 1980 Republican Platform Text calling for replacement of the "crazy quilt of wasteful programs with a system of block grants that will restore decision making to local officials responsible to voters and parents" (p. 2034). The block

grant was less than the administration's aspirations. Vocational education and special education escaped inclusion in the block. But a vital change had been effected. The flow of federal involvement in educational policy had been reversed. The addition of new categorical programs was made significantly more difficult; the likelihood that existing programs would be added to the block grant was made more likely. From 1958 to 1982, the conservatives were fighting a vigorous, but losing battle, categorical proposal by categorical proposal, to thwart the extension of federal involvement in education. Now the liberals found themselves pressed to save existing categorical initiatives with little chance of adding new ones. The significance of the block grant is in reversing this trend which, simultaneously, removed ED from the business of inventing and sponsoring federal-level interventions in education. The block grant can be viewed as an enabling step toward the President's concept of the new federalism as it might be applied to education.

Less dramatic, but complementary to the block grant, was the effort to disentangle the federal government from the web of regulatory requirements attached to the categorical programs. The disentanglement was based on revocation and non-enforcement. In the former category, for example, Secretary Bell announced the revocation of thirty sets of rules associated with nineteen of the categorical programs that had been included in the block grant. Enforcement was constrained, for example, by preventing the Department's Office of Civil Rights from using Title VI to require bilingual instruction in the public schools.

Halfway through the first Reagan administration an unexpected

realization dawned on the educationist community. The conventional wisdom held by previous administrations toward education had operated on the assumption that the education lobby, individually and collectively, was a force with which the executive branch needed to be concerned. But this administration had almost entirely ignored the lobby. With the exception of Secretary Bell, leaders in ED were non-educationists - appointed without reference to or consultation with the educational community. The administration went out of its way to snub the largest lobby of all, the National Education Association. Consultation with the education community about planned changes in education was replaced by press conferences to announce the changes. And the consequences to the administration of this unorthodox behavior appeared to be minimal. In fact, the educationist lobby had begun to accommodate to the new rules of the game and had settled in for a rear guard action protecting critical elements of the federal role in education. Whatever else one could say about the first half of the Reagan administration and however successful individual lobbies and lobbyists had been in protecting their interests, the initiative lay in the hands of an administration that wanted to chart a new course in federal educational policy.

1983 - The Reform Reports

The kindest interpretation of the reason for the appearance of the plenitude of reform reports on education in 1983 and 1984 is that there was a groundswell of concern about education two to three years earlier. A more realistic explanation is probably that the reports were the fallout

from a period of uncertainty about where education was headed at the national level. The reversal of the normal course of events that seemed likely from President Reagan's early statements about the field encouraged the establishment of a commission, committees, task forces and teams to examine where the field was and where it was headed. Surely that is an appropriate explanation for the National Commission on Excellence in Education. The Commission was one of the few steps the new Secretary of Education could take without conflicting directly with one or another of the administration's positions about deemphasizing, diminishing, and decentralizing the federal role in education.

By accident or design, A Nation at Risk was a smashing success, a best seller about educational reform, and just in time for the 1984 campaign. The report was heralded by some as the initiator of a national policy debate on education and the re-establishment of education on the national policy agenda. The latter was true if the individual state actions in educational policy are taken into account. The former was probably not true. The reaction to A Nation at Risk was more a response of consensus than debate. The reception paralleled the response given to the Conant Report on the American high school in 1959. Debate or consensus, the report stimulated national, state, and local interest in education.

There were a number of curious effects. One of the original five D's, i.e., deemphasis, suffered a setback. The President discovered that involvement in educational policy can be fun and rewarding. Most importantly from the administration's viewpoint, the involvement was possible without compromising seriously the criteria of diminution,

decentralization, deregulation or, even, disestablishment. The follow-up on the Commission report has centered in the state capitals. No major new federal initiatives were required. Exhortation and suasion actually worked as the keystone to the federal role in the field. The report itself and the follow through on the report had four effects that confirmed biases of the administration:

(1) By title and content, the report switched the attention of educational reformers and policy makers from equity to excellence. The argument of the report is essentially that excellence begets true equity.

(2) A Nation at Risk baldly omitted the educationist community from most of the reform recommendations. No one reading the report would expect educationists to be the key actors in the reform movement.

(3) The report suggested a school improvement strategy based on modified standards and requirements. This contrasted sharply with the complex school improvement efforts of ED built around such technical assistance strategies as the National Diffusion Network or the Research and Development Exchange.

(4) The locus for action for reform was switched from the national level to state and local levels. While recognizing a federal role in education, the recommendations focused on standards and requirements under the control of state and local policy makers.

1984 - Awards and Recognition

The President had a relatively busy "education year" although expectations for education policy in an election year are always modest. The year was kicked off in December 1983 with a National Forum on Education in Indianapolis. The Forum was clearly an activity of consensus building to validate the Excellence Commission report and to encourage the states to be about the business of educational reform. The primary activity of ED was to keep education visible through a variety of awards programs for teachers, principals, students, and schools - awards to celebrate the existence of excellent performance in education wherever it existed. The strategy worked well to defuse education as a campaign issue but, equally importantly, its effects on educational policy were to:

(1) Highlight reform moves already underway;

(2) Imply that the tactics in education employed by the administration to date were already bearing fruit;

(3) Encourage state policy makers to press ahead with such popular reform topics as career ladders for teachers, increased graduation requirements, competency tests for teachers, and lengthened school calendar years and school days.

First Term Report Card

An assessment of the success of the administration in educational policy during its first term should be made on the basis of its asserted policy preferences in 1980-81, not those that have developed during the past five years. How would they fare in their five subject areas? Here is

our grading.

Table 2

First Term Report Card on Education for the Reagan Administration

| Policy Preference Area | Grade | |
|---|---|---|
| Diminution | B+ | (1) |
| Deregulation | B | (2) |
| Decentralization | A | (3) |
| Disestablishment | C | (4) |
| De-emphasis | B- | (5) |

Comments of Grader

(1) Your biggest gains in pursuit of diminution occurred early. However, the continued decline in programs and positions in ED plus holding the line on expenditures for all programs except the Guaranteed Student Loan entitlements was better than could have reasonably been expected. Most importantly, you established the expectation for less.

(2) After the initial push to clear out regulations in ED, your gains have been made chiefly by allowing regulations to atrophy through non-enforcement. The block grant abetted this overall effort and you deserve a better than average grade.

(3) Although the block grant has not yet been extended to vocational and special education you should be proud of your achievement in your aim to decentralize. Educational policy activity at the state level has increased at an enormous rate. Governors can now

be designated legitimately as "education governors." Most important of all, you have made it virtually impossible to generate and sustain interest in new categorical programs. The action agenda in policy is in the hands of the states. The flow of federal policy is toward additional decentralization rather than intervention.

(4) Judged as a de jure issue you have failed. But there is no way to overlook the fact that the Department has been halved in size, that its programs have been reduced sharply, and its program initiatives have almost entirely disappeared.

(5) The furor surrounding the National Commission on Excellence in Education report almost dropped this grade to a critically low level. However, a good recovery is underway. No one believes that you have a priority interest in education or education policy at the federal level. Your interests are now channeled to encouraging the states and exhorting them to push your substantive interests in achieving a good education.

As report cards go, this one covers a long time period, a time during which the administration added educational policy interests of a substantive order to its earlier procedural emphases. The current list of preferences will be commented upon in the next section, but before leaving the earlier time period, we should add some affective changes that represent accomplishments outside the five Ds. By tying into predispositions of the American people prior to 1980 about education and by emphasizing the President's view of education in the media, the administration has convinced

or agrees with a large segment of the populace[1] that:

- The core problems of the schools are discipline, drugs, standards, and teachers.
- The organized teaching profession cannot be counted upon to reform education. Its continuing opposition to merit pay for teachers for example, is evidence that the profession is more concerned with protection than progress.
- School improvement can be achieved by establishing and adhering to higher standards and requirements for admission to educational curricula, progress through the schools, and exit from the schools through graduation.
- Problems of education cannot be solved at the federal level. Efforts to do so have failed.
- Parents should control the choice of schools their children attend and should be involved in their children's education.
- Localities should be in control of their own schools.
- Moral values, prayer, and character education need to be returned to the schools.
- A cabinet-level department of education is not needed.
- The federal government should be less rather than more involved in education.
- Schools would be better if they were not a public monopoly.
- Achievement levels in public schools should be made public and compared across school systems, within and across states.
- Teachers would be better if they earned salary increases by merit.

- Students would be better if they competed directly for awards and promotion.
- Most students do not work hard enough in school.
- Most students graduate from high school with insufficient preparation to earn a living or go on to college.
- School curricula should concentrate on the basics, include more "hard" subjects and fewer electives.

The most interesting feature of these positions about education is not whether they were latent in the sixties and seventies or whether they have grown in the eighties but that they now fit the present agenda being advocated by the President and the Secretary of Education. As one looks ahead at the possible policy changes in education in 1985-1988 and beyond there is, at least currently, substantial support among the American people for the administration's policy preferences.

Progress on the Administration's Policy Agenda, Fall 1985

On the day this sentence is being written (September 26, 1985), Secretary Bennett, in a major address, labeled the transitional bilingual education program of ED a failure. The Secretary indicated that he will ask Congress to lift current restrictions on the use of bilingual funds to allow local schools the option of substituting intensive courses in English in place of instruction in the student's native language. Federal policy changes are difficult to portray. Will the Secretary be successful in his request to lift legislative restrictions? Is this the beginning of a sustained attack on bilingual instruction? Is there an effective

constituency for bilingual education to thwart the attack if it is mounted? Specific federal policy actions or speeches generate a sense of crisis that too much is happening too quickly. Conversely, policy shifts move at such a glacial pace that the movement is barely noticeable. We have no idea where the Secretary intends to go with his comments on bilingual education or who will or will not support him. But we do know one thing; his position on this issue from its emphasis on local choice to its deemphasis on categorical aid for bilingual students is consistent with the policy preferences of the Reagan administration. And this is the level of analysis that will be pursued in this section. Actions and assertions will be used to illustrate policy preferences, but the central focus will remain on the preferences - the commitment to them and progress toward their achievement.

Table 3 lists the current policy preferences of the Reagan administration and illustrates contemplated and completed actions that support those preferences. The agenda was not hard to compile. Whether one analyzes a radio address on education by the President, the State of the Union messages of the past two years, or the Secretary-Designate's testimony at his confirmation hearing, the same issues are discussed and the same positions are advocated. This agenda is consistent with the 5 Ds but extends into the substantive dimensions of education in which the President has a strong personal interest.

Before turning to the preferences, however, we want to comment on two frequent assertions relevant to the analysis, i.e., that this administration (1) is disinterested in education and (2) has had no policy

Table 3

EDUCATIONAL POLICY PREFERENCES OF THE REAGAN ADMINISTRATION 1985-1988

| POLICY PREFERENCE | SUPPORTIVE ACTIONS AND EMPHASES |
|---|---|
| 1. Disestablishment of ED: (a reduced federal role in education) | - Reduction of ED staff size<br>- Intra-agency reorganization & consolidation<br>- Budgetary reductions<br>- Program elimination<br>- Alternative agency forms |
| 2. Institutional Competition: (breaking the monopoly of the public school to stimulate excellent performance) | - Tuition Tax credits<br>- Vouchers<br>- School awards programs<br>- "Wall chart": monitoring state educational achievements |
| 3. Individual Competition: (recognizing excellence to stimulate excellence) | - Merit pay, career ladders for teachers<br>- Academic fitness program<br>- Awards to teachers and principals<br>- Eligibility for post secondary scholarships, fellowships, and loans |
| 4. Performance Standards: (increasing minimum standards for teachers and students) | - Increased credit requirements for high school graduation<br>- Proficiency examinations in addition to course requirements<br>- Competency tests for teachers<br>- Modified admission and certification standards for teachers |
| 5. Focus on Content: (emphasis on basics to insure performance in critical instructional areas) | - Concentration on:<br>. traditional basics, the 3 Rs<br>. new basics, science, mathematics, computer skills<br>- Scholarships for science and mathematics teachers<br>- More required courses for college and vocational preparation<br>- Funds for NSF and ED for science and mathematics education |
| 6. Parental Choice: (parental control over what, where, and how their children will learn) | - Tuition tax credits<br>- Vouchers<br>- Parental involvement in the schooling process<br>- Parental involvement in determining curricular content |
| 7. Character: (strengthening traditional values in schools) | - Discipline in the schools<br>- Character education<br>- School prayer<br>- Work ethic |
| 8. Devolution: (continued transfer of educational authority to state and local levels) | - Extension of the block grant<br>- Deregulation and limited regulatory enforcement<br>- Elimination of unnecessary programs<br>- Reduction in educational expenditures<br>- Federal role of support, encouragement, and exhortation |
| 9. Redirection: (replacement of policy emphases in the federal role prominent in prior administrations) | - Equity<br>- Social or welfare concerns<br>- Common school<br>- Regulation<br>- Intervention<br>- Scope of the federal role |

agenda for education. These are not simply charges from political antagonists but observations of scholarly analysts, some of whom favor the general positions of the administration. For example, Denis Doyle and Terry Hartle contended that in the first administration Reagan had no overarching education policy; that, "the real nature of the Reagan administration's interest in education . . . was not great. In truth, beyond the battle of the budget the administration cared little - it cared not enough to do much, up or down" (p. 149). If we believed the Doyle and Hartle assertion to be true we would be more casual about where education policy is headed and what its effects are likely to be on American schools.

Such comments, however, need to be considered in a relative context, i.e., compared to what. This President talks about education at the drop of a hat. He lectures about it in his State of the Union messages. He comments on it in his weekly radio show. And he says the same things - basic themes with modest variations. His predecessors, courted by the educationist community, seldom fitted in a word about education in the State of the Union message. If they thought about education at all it was a well guarded secret. In relative terms, this administration, from the White House, exhibits more interest in education than its predecessors but it gives off ambiguous signals by its actions, e.g.:

- ED was ignored for most of the first Reagan administration. Staff and programs were cut. Positions in ED were used as a dumping ground for political appointments.
- The professional education community was disregarded by the President and by ED.

- No substantive program initiatives were mounted by the administration and forwarded for Congressional action.
- The administration cut the ED budget arbitrarily without regard for program consequences.
- When the going got tough on the administration's proposals, i.e., further budget cuts, eliminating ED, tuition tax credits, school prayer, the administration used up few political chips in the battle.

All these assertions are true. Collectively, they may indicate that education is not the high priority item on the federal agenda that many of its advocates would wish. Of course it is not and it never has been. Education is a small scale item in Washington. Everyone simply assumes that it is overwhelmed as a policy concern by the budget deficit, defense, the strength of the social security system, health, and agriculture. However, this President has exhibited an almost avocational interest in the field. He cares about educational issues in a way uncharacteristic of his predecessors. The issues he cares about <u>are</u> an agenda and they reflect the position of a large political constituency. Actions advocated by and taken by the administration that are labeled anti-education by the educationist community are, instead, actions that fit the policy preferences and relatively stable agenda of the administration, to wit:

- ED was dumped on because it was an unwanted department populated by long time liberals. The Department is being set up for disestablishment.
- The professional education community opposed the President in the

1980 election and advocated a federal role in education repugnant to him. They were ignored to weaken their influence.

- The lack of program initiatives at the federal level is appropriate to encourage state and local initiatives and to reduce the federal involvement in education.
- The budget cuts were part of a broader fiscal strategy. If the federal budget is healthy, economic growth will allow education to flourish with state and local tax dollars. And, of course, federal dollars pumped into education have had a pernicious rather than efficacious impact on education.
- One may not be able to argue that the administration has risked its life on education issues. But session after session the administration has proposed the same actions, i.e., budget cuts, tuition tax credits, school prayer, disestablishment. The administration has not been foolhardy in support of its goals but it has been assiduous.

Lest we move too far in the opposite direction we should summarize our observations about educational policy in the Reagan administration. Education is a weak and sporadic policy concern at the federal level. This President is more interested in educational issues than most of his predecessors. His interests range from structure, i.e., advocating devolution, to how to run a classroom, i.e., concentrate on basics, traditional values, and discipline. The administration projects a more consistent policy agenda in education than any administration since Lyndon Johnson. This consistency added to the constancy of the pursuit of its preference

has, is, and will accomplish more change than the administration has been credited with to date.

Now, back to Table 3 and the current policy preferences.

Disestablishment

None of the administration's preferences has attracted less Congressional support than the elimination of the Department of Education. Prior to Secretary Bennett's nomination hearings, the President defused the issue of the de jure elimination of the Department by assuring Senator Hatch by letter that he would not propose to abolish the Department at this time because of lack of support in Congress. So that this position would not be misunderstood, the President added, "I still feel . . . that federal education programs could be administered effectively without a Cabinet level agency" (Education Week, Feb. 6, 1985, p. 9).

The White House and the Office of Management and Budget have pursued a program designed to substitute de facto abolition of ED for the failure of the de jure action. The staff of the Department has been reduced from roughly 7400 employees in 1980 to 5000 in 1985. The activities of the Department have been reduced sharply by:

a) eliminating categorical programs now covered by the block grant;
b) removing sets of regulations - over 200 are still under review;
c) reducing in status and scope such programs as Women's Educational Equity, migrant education, desegregation assistance;
d) constraining, in most cases eliminating, new program initiatives;
e) reducing the Department's budget.

The current actions of the administration are consistent with its past efforts. The President charged the Secretary-designate with responsibility for reorganizing the agency. To date this has resulted in a consolidation of the research and school improvement programs of the Department under a newly appointed assistant secretary for education. The consolidation merged the National Institute of Education with the National Center for Educational Statistics. This simplifies the internal structure of the Department and effectively eliminates the free-standing National Institute of Education. The President's FY '86 budget called for a three billion dollar decrease for ED. The new Secretary has emphasized his belief that the most powerful tool available to the Department is to lead the revitalization of education through the use of the bully pulpit provided by his office.

The position asserted by the Heritage Foundation in Mandate for Leadership II (1984) reflected the basic position of the administration:

> The establishment of a Cabinet-level Department of Education was an historic blunder, a combination of overweening federal ambition and pandering to interest groups. Still, the Department exists. The question now becomes: How can it be turned into an agency of minimum nuisance, modest scope and yet positive moral influence on the nature and quality of American education. (p. 54)

The author of that report proposed a three-function agency, i.e., a check-writing machine, a statistical bureau, and a pulpit to project "a vision of what citizens might reasonably expect from their children's

schools, teachers, textbooks, and colleges" (p. 55). That author, Eileen M. Gardner, was chosen by Secretary Bennett for a post in the Secretary's office but ran a cropper in her confirmation hearings. Her view of the Department, however, seems to reflect that of the Secretary and probably signals continued efforts to reduce enforcement and regulation, consolidate programs through intradepartmental mergers, and emphasize the role of the Secretary in moral and educational suasion.

There is an important point to be noted in regard to this policy arena. If you were to imagine a continuum of actions in support of the policy preference for disestablishment you might imagine them ranging from de jure elimination (the most extreme action) to, perhaps, continued reduction in ED staff size or constraints on enforcement (as illustrations of more modest vigor in pursuit of the preference of disestablishment). However, if you imagined the continuum of actions that might be considered on the policy issue of the appropriateness, role, and scope of a Department of Education you would include an expanded department, more federal level responsibility for education, added areas of needed federal enforcement. The policy debate over the establishment of ED in the first place considered the full range of possibilities from the necessity for a department to a reduction in the influence of the then-existing Office of Education. The current administration, of course, has no responsibility for representing the full continuum of actions. However, it is obvious that there are those who not only favor saving the Department in some form but also would advocate building on its current role. In Washington in 1985 they are invisible. The debate over ED covers its survival and how

constrained its role will become. There is no effective force advocating its expansion. As we move through the policy preferences, you should keep this in mind. The policy debate over education is constrained by a truncated continuum of preferences and actions in the areas that the administration has laid out for consideration. Individual actions are opposed or thwarted effectively, e.g., de jure disestablishment of the Department of Education, but the over-arching policy preference is not challenged by a counter-preference, e.g., an expanded federal role in education to be administered by an enhanced cabinet-level department.

Institutional Competition

President Reagan has no doubt about the efficacy of institutional competition as a route to excellence in education. In his State of the Union Message in 1984 he noted "without standards and competition, there can be no champions, no records broken, no excellence in education or any other walk of life" (p. 91). Implementing a policy of institutional competition has been both easy and difficult. The easy parts are the awards and recognition programs and the dissemination of comparative levels of school achievement. Awards programs have blossomed over the past two years, e.g., Secondary School Recognition Program, Excellent Private Schools Program, special honors to school boards that adopted the recommendations of the National Commission on Excellence in Education, awards for vocational education programs, and exemplary Chapter 1 programs. Most recently, in October 1985, Secretary Bennett proclaimed 1985-1986 as the "Year of the Elementary School" and added an awards program for

exemplary elementary schools. The Secretary's "wallchart," initiated by former Secretary Bell, contrasted educational indicators of input and attainment by states and institutionalized interest in comparative achievement. Having initially criticized the utility of the wall-chart, the Council of Chief State School Officers voted recently to conduct cross-state assessments of students achievement. Findings from these assessments will be reported each year beginning in 1987.

The difficult part has turned out to be gaining support for either tuition tax credits or vouchers that would set up competition between public and private schools and among public schools for potential students. The administration's commitment to push on this front has not wavered. Earlier this year, in an address to The National Association of Independent Schools, the President asserted that "these proposals have the support of the American people. Make no mistake. Secretary Bennett and I intend to see them through to their enactment." He argued, as he has in the past, that, "tuition tax credits and education vouchers would foster greater diversity and, hence, higher standards throughout our system of education" (Bridgman, 1985, March 6, p. 1). Tuition tax credits and vouchers for students eligible for Chapter 1 funds were included in the administration's FY '86 budget proposal. As recently as November 1985, following the Felton decision, ED drafted a new voucher bill, The Equity and Choice Act of 1985 (TEACH); Undersecretary Bauer noted that it would be one of the Department's top priorities. The Secretary has been active throughout the year in supporting and encouraging state level initiatives for voucher plans.

The general policy preference of institutional competition and the more specific program proposal for tuition tax credits illustrate this President's personal response to some educational policy issues. One ED administrator compared the President's commitment to tuition tax credits to his support for tax reform, that is, as items of concern personally and directly to him. As the notation from the State of the Union Address indicated, the President assumes that the relationship between competition and achievement is an aphorism. This may lead him to the conclusion that the American people are also committed to tax credits and vouchers and the evidence from national polls indicates that although the public does not favor tax support for parochial schools they do favor vouchers.

A committed administration with public support suggests that the movement toward some form of tax credits and vouchers to supplement institutional awards programs is likely in a number of states, if not at the federal level.

Individual Competition

The administration's interest in competition as a route to educational excellence includes teachers, students, and administrators. The primary action involving teachers has been the advocacy of merit pay. This was one of the few initiatives by Secretary Bell that was embraced unequivocally by the White House. The Secretary used discretionary fund grants to the states to encourage planning and experimentation with career ladder plans and other forms of merit pay. The President cheered him on. For example, in his presentation to the National Association of Independent Schools just

cited, he said in support of merit pay, "Hard earned tax dollars have no business rewarding mediocrity. They must be used to encourage excellence" (Bridgman, 1985, March 6, p. 29). By February 1985, thirty-eight states had some form of merit pay legislation, typically career ladders, enacted, endorsed, or under consideration by the legislature (Bridgman, 1985, February 6, p. 31). Of that group two had statewide plans in operation and five had adopted trial policies. This is an interesting policy preference to examine because it had been opposed openly by the National Education Association, opposed - except under controlled conditions - by the American Federation of Teachers, noteworthy by its absence in the current personnel policies of over ninety-five percent of the local education agencies in the country, but supported regularly in public opinion polls.

The emphasis on competition among students and principals has been more benign. The latter group has received recognition through the school awards programs and elementary school principals have been honored under the National Distinguished Principals Program. The basic national program for students has been the Academic Fitness Awards. One can argue, however, that the modification of academic standards is a form of individual competition that may, over the long haul, have a greater impact on students' educational opportunities than would any student-to-student competition. To date, the direct competition has been limited to a press for higher academic standards to qualify for student loan and fellowship programs in higher education.

The environment for stimulating individual competition can be generated by (1) granting awards to achievers or (2) limiting salary

increments or promotion or admission to institutions or programs to those who reach specified levels of performance. Awards programs highlight achievement and introduce minimal tension. Merit pay or career ladders or standards for access to extra-curricular activities or eligibility for student aid are quite different matters. They provoke tension. Teachers' organizations walk a fine line between opposition to a popular policy and evidence from the organizational literature that the effect of merit pay may be deleterious to the interests of their membership and to educational productivity. This battle will be waged in different forms in the fifty states with continued vocal and incentive support from the administration. The issue of student competition for scholarship and fellowship funds in higher education is a battleground on which concerns for excellence and equity will be fought directly. Each side will attempt to mute the conflict by insisting on its concern for both. The administration is more concerned about excellence.

Performance Standards

No emphasis in the report of The National Commission on Excellence in Education was more clear than the Commission's dissatisfaction with the achievements of the American educational system. Equally clear was its confidence that a key route to modifying that condition is through increasing minimum performance standards for students and teachers. This use of standards to effect school improvement stands in contrast to the previous efforts of the Department of Education to create and support such sophisticated diffusion and dissemination programs as the National

Diffusion Network, The Research and Development Exchange, Teacher Corps, and Teacher Centers. This change has turned the attention of federal and state level educational policy makers away from concern with the stimulation and support of local school improvement efforts to standard setting for local performance; away from process to product.

Although there are instances of modified performance standards for students at other than the high school level, the initial emphasis has been on high school graduation. In the last two years over eighty percent of the states have raised graduation requirements, ten states have established special honors diplomas, and fifteen states require exit proficiency examinations beyond the completion of course work to qualify for graduation (Bridgman, 1985, February 6, p. 31). Thirteen state legislatures have manipulated the time of students in school by extending the school day or the school year and seven others have such a move under consideration.

Teachers have attracted more scrutiny in regard to the adjustment of standards than might have been predicted. Twenty-nine states have adopted various forms of proficiency examinations for teachers at both the points of admission to and completion of teacher training programs. The professional associations of teachers and teacher educators have responded to the obvious public support for higher standards. The American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education has endorsed a national professional examination for teachers. The National Council for the Accreditation of Teacher Education has adopted higher standards for program accreditation of schools of education. And both the NEA and AFT have announced support of entrance standards to the teaching profession that

involve some form of competency testing for teachers.

Enthusiasm for adjusting standards upward by fiat is easy to muster. The policy maker is doing something about the problem. The solution is quick and visible. The cost is low. The responsibility for implementation is elsewhere. The counter points are obvious but hard to argue, i.e., the effect on equity, the inability to meet the new standards with current resources, the complexity of effecting improvement-oriented change in organizations. The adjustment of standards for admission to teaching may not solve the enduring problem of attracting top college graduates to a low paying job with few opportunities for advancement. But it does express, at least symbolically, the concern of the policy maker for teacher quality. Some states have already added, and others soon will, school improvement programs that provide additional resources at the local level to support the press for higher achievement standards. But the emphasis on minimum standards reflects the feeling by the public that the schools have been underachieving, that educationists cannot or will not effect reform on their own, that teachers and administrators are not as capable as they ought to be, that students are not working hard enough, and that expectations for performance by students and teachers have been deteriorating not increasing. The federal level policy makers in education will employ their bully pulpit to advocate higher standards. The states will adopt higher standards. The local educational agencies will implement the standards. Predicting the effects may be ambiguous but predicting the vigorous pursuit of this policy preference seems clear.

The vexatious policy issue surrounding the adjustment of standards is

the impact of the modified standards on equity for minority groups and the poor. Secretary Bennett has stated the administration's position, i.e., higher standards will benefit the poor. He argues that although there may be an initial increase in the dropout rate, the ultimate benefit will accrue to the economically disadvantaged through the acquisition of the skills and knowledge that will open up the economic system to them. That position will be debated.

Focus on Content

Secretary Bennett introduced the phrase "3Cs" to describe the special emphasis of his term of office. The first of these is content. The Reagan administration has pushed this preference earlier under slightly different labels - concentration on basics and on the new basics, i.e., science, mathematics, and computer skills. State legislatures have picked up the theme by requiring more high school graduation credits in science and mathematics, subjects where enrollment in advanced courses had declined. Half of the states have established scholarship and forgiveable loan programs to encourage high school students to enter teaching - most of these programs are concentrated on mathematics and science.

The only federal educational policy initiative of the past five years that smacks of the old categorical programs was PL98-377 - the act to support pre-collegiate mathematics and science education. The bill was signed into law by President Reagan on August 11, 1984. That legislation responded to the alleged dismal state of mathematics and science instruction in the schools by authorizing and appropriating funds to both

the National Science Foundation and the Department of Education for activities ranging from teacher institutes, to merit scholarships, to Presidential awards for teaching excellence, the development of instructional materials, and grants to colleges and universities, local education agencies, and state education agencies.[2]

The content focus on "hard subjects," whether old or new basics, has not ignored vocational education. However, the administration's emphasis in vocational education is the direct link between education and employability. The Secretary's recent attack on bilingual education, for example, was grounded in his concern for opening up opportunities for employment and advanced education to bilingual students who need English proficiency.

The Secretary has indicated his desire to expand the focus on content beyond the basics to a dialogue about what is to be taught. In his early statements he criticized the lack of a coherent design in the curricula of many schools and offered the advice that schools should alter their programs to emphasize the "core studies [that] constitute the nucleus of our schools' common curricula," stressing mathematics, science, English, and history (Hertling, 1985, March 20, p. 10). More recently he noted that he intended to finance activities to upgrade textbooks and teaching materials. "He also seeks the development of projects that would allow the public to identify essential knowledge - literary works or historical events that should be familiar to every child" (Hertling, 1985, June 12, p. 10).

While this policy was focused on the basics or new basics, it seemed

to be one of the administration's least controversial preferences. The negative concerns expressed have been gentle reminders that the new basics may ignore the humanities or that the basics provided insufficient emphasis on foreign languages, the arts, and physical education. The recent additions to the agenda by Secretary Bennett may elevate the level of opposition confronted by the administration. Past efforts to upgrade textbooks and teaching materials have often triggered ideological debates. A truly national debate over essential knowledge will stimulate dissension if the consequence appears to have practical implications for local schools. The better guess, however, is that the focus on content will be contained within areas of public consensus or indifference and that ED will support individuals and groups at state and local levels who share the general concern for an emphasis on traditionally defined basic courses of study.

Parental Choice

The second of the Secretary's three Cs is choice. Choice actually covers three distinct interests of the administration: (1) parental control over where their children attend schools, (2) parental influence on what is to be taught, by whom, and how, and (3) parental involvement in the schooling process for their children. However, the cornerstone of this area of policy preference is the creation of conditions under which parents can choose their child's school. Secretary Bennett argues that this is extending to the poor the privilege held by the more affluent who exercise the privilege by choice of neighborhood or choice of a private school. The

necessary condition for parental choice of schools has been defined by the administration as some form of educational vouchers. As was noted in the earlier section on institutional competition, the tactics to achieve this end now include both supporting state initiatives to establish voucher plans and a national plan targeted to children eligible for assistance under Chapter 1.

Parental influence on what is to be taught, by whom, and how and parental involvement in the schooling process has, to this point, been primarily an issue of advocacy by the Secretary. For so long as the issue is presented exhortatively, the national controversy surrounding it will be minimal. It is difficult to argue that parents should not control their child's education. The controversy arises when the choice exercised by the parent clashes with community or societal norms. The choice of some parents will conflict with social values about topics as diverse as creationism, right-to-life, segregation, sexism, faith healing, and AIDS. Reconciling parental control with social, philosophical, or religious "goods" is problematic. Ultimately, the home school movement is the only solution to non-conflicting parental choice. The bias of liberal and conservative parents in this country toward alternative choices among "good" schools, subjects, and methods in education would result in conflicts that would involve this administration in assuming substantive positions, e.g., supporting prayer in the schools. That is the prospective concern of many liberals and the hope of many conservatives.

Character

Secretary Bennett's third C is character. In describing the use of the Secretary's discretionary funds to foster this goal, Bennett indicated that he wants to fund projects that foster "wholesome" student character. Schools should encourage "such qualities as thoughtfulness, kindness, honesty, respect for the law, knowing right from wrong, respect for parents and teachers, diligence, self-sacrifice, hard work, fairness, self-discipline and love of country" (Hertling, 1985, June 12, p. 10). Illustrating the types of character-related projects that could receive funds he mentioned: (1) use of history, literature, and other academic subjects to promote character development; (2) establishment of clear goals and policies that "respect and support values from the students' homes," and encourage attendance, academic excellence and an orderly drug-free environment (Hertling, 1985, June 12, p. 10). The President is usually more direct in his definition emphasizing "good old-fashioned discipline" and "organized school prayer." In the broadest sense the administration's position defines traditional American values as derivative from the work ethic and the country's Judeo-Christian heritage.

The implementation of the policy preference in this area of concern will continue to include advocacy of the school prayer amendment. The administration has funded a center on school discipline and violence. The Secretary intends to use his discretionary funds to encourage projects on character development in schools.

This is a policy preference territory broad enough to cover areas of

general agreement, e.g., maintenance of a drug-free environment in schools, and topics of sharp disagreement, e.g., sanctioned school prayer. Overall, however, the administration can expect broad public support for its position on character education since few of the proposals for action, except the school prayer amendment, infringe directly on local school practices.

Devolution

The administration's definition of an appropriate role for the federal government in education is inherent in this policy preference, i.e., a visible presence without operational responsibilities that offers advice, counsel, support, encouragement, and exhortation to those who have operational responsibility - parents, local communities, and state governments. Some of the analysts who feel that the administration has been thwarted in its goals to modify educational policy support their view by pointing to the stagnation of progress in the transfer of responsibility to the states following the early success with the block grant, deregulation, and the reduction in educational expenditures. We argue the reverse. The failure of the administration's opponents to reassert a growing federal role has left the territory open to the states and they are claiming the territory. The level of state activity is increasing. State level political leaders are benefiting from their increased involvement in educational improvement activities.

The 1985 legislatures evidenced a continuing expansion of the state's role in education. Chris Pipho (1985) noted, for example:

- Georgia's reform law includes a full-day kindergarten program by

1987-88, a statewide core curriculum, a ten percent salary increase for teachers, a career ladder program for teachers.

- Illinois passed a comprehensive reform act that includes forty-four education reforms and two tax increase measures. Elements include preschool programs, a mathematics/science academy, report cards for schools, performance-based pay programs, regional centers for computer education and gifted children, and $211 million in new money for education in 1986.
- Missouri passed the Excellence in Education Act of 1985 that includes student competency testing in all basic skill areas, an incentive program to recruit teachers, district-based professional development committees, an incentive program to encourage the adoption of career ladders for teachers, and a unique legislative oversight provision that convenes a joint committee of the general assembly in 1988 and every fourth year after to study the public schools and make recommendations for legislative action.
- Massachusetts approved a reform bill increasing expenditures for education by $210 million - targeted on school programs, student performance, and teacher and administrator performance.

(October, pp. 101, 175-176).

What would a comparable report look like for the federal government in 1985? One could begin with the President's budget proposal that called for a three billion dollar reduction in the ED budget for FY '86. The congressional and professional association battles during the year centered on resisting that cut, insuring that orderly recompetition of the educa-

tional laboratory and centers program was conducted, protecting student aid in higher education grant and loan programs from sharp reductions or major redefinition during reauthorization of the Higher Education Act. That does not imply inactivity in Washington. The activity is simply different. Newsmaking events about education emanating from Washington center around awards programs, the Secretary's commentaries on educational issues, legislative initiatives by the administration designed to foster the administration's redefined federal role (e.g., Chapter 1 vouchers), and efforts by Congress and educational groups to protect existing federal investments in education.

The federal role in education has always been marginal in a quantitative sense (roughly eight percent of elementary and secondary school expenditures; about twenty percent of higher education costs because of the student aid programs). Qualitatively one can argue that the investment, though small, has been critical to achievements in the areas of equity and access for minority groups and women. Education is lost in the midst of the federal budget. But it is a big ticket item at the state level, amounting frequently to from one-third to one-half of the state's budget. With an expanding state interest in educational policy, that up to five years ago was restricted almost entirely to the state aid formula in each state, and an accompanying leveling off and decline of federal initiatives and involvement, we would conclude that devolution is alive and well in Washington. The administration is likely to win this battle by default.

Redirection

This is a synthetic category of policy preference for the administration contrived by the authors to account for deemphasis upon or the disappearance of policy preferences in education held by the federal government prior to 1980. The federal role that emerged from 1955–1980 was the creation and adoption of interventions to improve the American educational system by opening it up to least well served clientele, establishing school improvement strategies and tactics, funding areas in which states and localities were deemed laggard or fiscally incapable of response, and monitoring and evaluating the success of those endeavors after they had been undertaken.

At the least, one can argue that this pre-1980 role has been contained by the Reagan administration. The only exception of consequence that has emerged in the past five years is the mathematics and science legislation and its funding has been halved after one year of operation. The national reports on the condition of education in 1983 and 1984 set the stage for a response of the magnitude of the National Defense Education Act of 1958 or the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965. And the response occurred - at the state level. The federal response was, appropriately for this administration, exhortation and encouragement.

The driving wheel behind the categorical programs of the 1960s and 70s was equity for minorities, the poor, the handicapped, and women. That is no longer the case. Social and welfare concerns, including equity, are not major forces in national level decision making about education. This is not intended to be an argument that they are ignored - simply that they are

no longer pivotal considerations. For the present, a different set of priorities are in place in Washington that places emphasis on excellence in performance, competition, selectivity, economic concerns, choice, local initiative, and the support of traditional values. That is a different direction.

Likely Progress on the Administration's Policy Agenda, 1985-1988

We think there are a variety of contextual conditions that suggest the administration will make solid progress in its educational policy agenda over the next three years and that this trend toward devolution is likely to continue under successor administrations - Republican or Democratic. The conditions for change are more promising for the administration now than they were in 1981, to wit:

1. Consensus gentium - The administration is working with the "agreement of the people." Analyses of opinion polls indicate broad support for central elements of the administration's program including (a) increasing standards, (b) concentrating on basics, (c) reasserting traditional values in schools, (d) reducing the federal role, (e) rewarding merit, (f) increasing parental choice, (g) increasing competition, (h) keeping schools close to the people. We find it hard to believe that a tenacious administration with a consistent policy agenda will be unable to continue to show progress in areas in which its policy preferences have a popular base of support.

2. Decentralized activity - The states are already making inroads on the interventionist role in school improvement that had characterized the

federal categorical programs of pre-1980. What's more, this encroachment is paying positive political results at the state level. A new decentralized bureaucracy of educational policy analysts and specialists is appearing in state legislatures and governor's offices. There is no reason to believe that the states would look kindly on an effort to diminish the expanding role they are assuming. The movement toward devolution is already underway. To modify the movement will require the reversal of the current flow of activity.

3. Truncated policy continuum - The range of policy options in education that are being debated seriously in Washington in 1985 is narrow. In most areas, the options are from the status quo to the administration's asserted position. The American Defense Education Act, for example, is not a weighty matter for discussion. Expansion of ED is not imaginable. Significant budgetary increases for education are out of the question. The administration is sitting comfortably in a position where it can experience movement toward its preferences while defeats are simply break-even situations. To some extent this is always true of the administration in office. However, in the case of the current administration, the opposition is so muted that there are no live alternatives.

4. Muffled buffers - Both Congress and the professional associations find themselves in a difficult position to protect past educational policy and program positions and in a nearly impossible position to initiate new directions. Neither of these natural buffers against executive preferences can move effectively against public opinion. The associations are labeled quickly as special interest groups, e.g., the NEA on merit pay, and

congresspersons are left vulnerable to attack at home. Congressional initiatives are made even less likely by the fact that state-level politicians are enjoying their new-found prominence in educational policy making and are not likely to look favorably, as they once did, on "education senators or representatives." The most effective buffers in 1985 against federal educational policy changes are those that maintain a low profile and fight battles of containment. Their ultimate success would be more likely if there were some reason to believe that the current policy preferences of the Reagan administration had a narrow base of popular support. That is not so.

5. New management team - For the first time, the President has a management team in place at the Department of Education that is (a) committed to all aspects of the administration's platform for education, (b) free of commitment to any previous administration's positions in education and to the professional associations in education, and (c) able to articulate the administration's position to the media in a fashion that capitalizes on the concept of the bully pulpit. There is no reason to suspect that the vigor in pursuit of the administration's objectives will wane even if the White House devotes little time to them. There is every reason to guess that the White House is more supportive of and open to the current management team in ED than to its predecessor.

Our intent is not to guess about specific actions that will occur in educational policy from 1985 to 1988 or beyond. We have those guesses and they are tempting to offer because they attract controversy and attention. But they distract from the central focus of our argument. The educational

policy preferences of the Reagan administration will all show progress over the next three years; and the cumulative effect will be to modify further the basic federal role in education, to stimulate continued growth and independence of the state governments in educational policy development, and to foster the substantive interests of the administration in competition, increased performance standards, traditional values, parental choice, and a focus on the basics in education. To answer the questions with which we began:

1. Yes, the past five years have produced a significant, enduring change in federal educational policy.
2. Yes, there is more to come, in the remaining years of the Reagan administration and beyond.

## Footnotes

1. A separate occasional paper is being issued that deals solely with the popular support for the administration's views on education prior to and after 1980. That paper will summarize the major public opinion polls about education, or general polls that include education questions, from 1979 to 1985. Copies will be available from the UCEA Policy Studies Center, Education 248, Indiana University, Bloomington, IN 47405 after May 1, 1986.
2. Support for this effort has been short-lived. The fiscal 1986 budget for the program was reduced from the FY '85 appropriation of $100 million to $45 million.

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